

Swarland First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122240
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359199
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Irene Cochrane

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Liz Phillips
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Dyson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leamington Lane Felton, Morpeth Northumberland NE65 9JP
Telephone number	01670 787346
Fax number	
Email address	Janet.Dyson@northumberland.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons and observed four teachers. In addition, they scrutinised pupils' work. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at the data the school had collected on pupils' progress, its policies, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. The team analysed 34 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in monitoring pupils' progress to improve outcomes.
- The extent to which the school is succeeding in improving opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills and increase progress.
- The robustness of assessment and tracking procedures to identify any underachievement and improve progress.

Information about the school

Swarland First School is smaller in size than the average first school, with three classes. Almost all of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has recently experienced a number of staff changes. Childcare provision is provided at the school but is not subject to this inspection. The school has recently gained a number of awards including Arts Gold, Bronze Food for Life and the Activemark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Swarland First School is a good school. It promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles exceptionally well and pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Parents and carers value the care and support that their children receive in this friendly and inclusive school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their exemplary attendance. They feel safe in school because they have trust in the adults who look after them.

Pupils make good progress from their respective starting points and by the time they leave at the end of Year 4, their attainment is mainly above the expected level for their age. Teachers plan work that engages pupils well with a key focus on practical activities, but the rate of progress varies between classes and cohorts. The quality of teaching is good but there are some missed opportunities to increase the pace of learning to further challenge pupils in some lessons. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics. Progress is satisfactory and improving in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of a strong focus on letters and sounds through daily phonic teaching, although there are too few opportunities for children to spend time in outdoor learning.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for learning within and beyond the school. These contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and deepen their understanding through first-hand experiences.

The school has an accurate understanding of the main priorities for development and action taken is improving pupils' progress. The school has worked systematically since the last inspection to address the area identified for further improvement. Plans are in place to support the recent changes in staffing and focus on continuing to develop leadership skills. For these reasons, the school has good capacity for further improvement. The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable of the school's work but has not always fully checked the impact of actions undertaken.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics by increasing the level of pace and challenge in lessons.
- Further improve progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by increasing children's opportunities to learn outdoors.
- Increase the involvement of the governing body in holding the school to account for its performance by ensuring it regularly evaluates the impact of school plans and actions.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The positive relationships that exist across the school enable pupils to grow in confidence and contribute actively in lessons. They are keen to learn and work consistently well on their own or with others. They enjoy a challenge, although sometimes there are not enough opportunities for them to extend their learning at a higher level, particularly in mathematics and in their writing.

Data shows that children currently enter the school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. There is some variation, with lower than expected levels in their communication, language and literacy skills. Attainment overall is above average, with particular strengths in reading, and pupils' progress is good, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In Year 2, standards were significantly higher in 2009 than in previous years and particularly so in writing. This was attributed to the impact of the 'Big Write' and daily phonic sessions. Attainment dipped in 2010 because of the individual nature of the cohort of pupils that year. In Year 4, attainment increased in reading and mathematics and remained the same in writing. Outcomes in reading have been consistently high over the last three years. There are inevitable fluctuations over the years between groups of pupils because class sizes are so small and there has been some variation in children's starting points.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and effective interventions implemented. Partnerships with other agencies ensure that they receive the support they need. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are very polite, considerate and friendly. They feel safe, not only because of the support they receive from staff but also because they take considerable care of one another. Pupils have an exceptional understanding about healthy living and make an active contribution through growing vegetables in the school garden, which are used for their school meals. They participate well in the life of the school through involvement as Swarland School organisers. Pupils' attendance is outstanding. They take part in charity events to raise money for global charities, which contributes well to their understanding of cultures and communities that differ from their own. The personal skills that pupils develop and their ability to apply basic skills effectively ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of learning and future citizenship.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy lessons when teachers make learning fun through carefully selected practical activities that motivate them well. This was observed in a mathematics lesson when pupils had the help of 'Scaly' the dragon to help them count in sets of ten. As a result, pupils were keen to take part and worked well to achieve the task in hand. Although teachers are effective in using a range of practical strategies, opportunities to challenge and extend pupils' learning in mathematics and writing are not consistently carried out in all lessons. Teachers use assessment information to match work accurately to pupils' differing needs and to provide clear guidance to support improvement.

The curriculum is organised around a theme approach, with a wide range of practical activities to develop pupils' skills and interests. The introduction of a range of strategies to support writing, such as the 'Big Write' and increased phonics are having a positive impact on outcomes, as are practical problem-solving activities in mathematics. Pupils are keen to take part in the after-school clubs and activities and effective partnerships with other agencies contribute well to pupils' understanding of keeping safe and living healthy lives.

There is strong sense of community across the school because all adults know pupils well and take responsibility for their well-being. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well supported and effective partnerships with parents and carers and other professionals ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the help they need. Older pupils readily take an

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active part in caring for the younger members of the school at lunch time and playtimes. Parents and carers comment positively about the welcoming climate that exists in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction for school improvement. She knows each pupil well and this contributes significantly to the care and support they receive. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Actions taken to increase opportunities for problem-solving in mathematics have resulted in improved outcomes in this subject, as well as those actions taken to improve writing. Systems for tracking progress are used well to ensure that those pupils who require extra support to improve their learning receive the help they need. The school promotes equal opportunities well and its procedures for tackling all forms of discrimination are effective.

Good systems are in place to regularly monitor and evaluate teaching, but due to recent staff changes, this responsibility remains largely with the headteacher. Pupils' outcomes are analysed and pupils' progress data is used effectively to inform school improvement planning.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school and has a good understanding of the key priorities for improvement. It has developed its monitoring role and is aware of the need to evaluate the impact of school priorities. Safeguarding arrangements are in place and staff have the necessary skills to identify those pupils who may be at risk, in order to take action to secure their welfare. The school has a structured approach to community cohesion and as a result, pupils find out about a range of cultures and have a good understanding about the diverse nature of society.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory and improving progress in the Early Years Foundation stage. By the end of the Reception Year the majority of children have reached outcomes that are broadly average. There has been an improving trend in communication, language and literacy skills as a result of a daily focus on phonic development.

Children settle readily into school through well planned opportunities to become familiar with their new surroundings and effective transition arrangements are in place with the pre-school provision on site. Relationships and behaviour are good. Children are confident, have good levels of independence and select sensibly from the resources available to them. Staff use their knowledge of children to plan activities that reflect their interests and stage of development, but do not use this information consistently to ensure that activities build well on prior learning. During the inspection, children were observed enthusiastically participating in designing a travelling machine in the school playground, but there are too few opportunities provided for children to learn and play outdoors.

The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader has quickly addressed the key priorities for development resulting in the establishment of more focused assessment systems and increased parental liaison.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers made comment about the school's performance by completing questionnaires. The vast majority of parents and carers are highly positive about the work the school does. Inspectors agree with this view. Very few parents expressed issues of concern, but the inspectors found no evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swarland First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 59 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	56	14	41	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	25	74	8	24	0	0	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	44	18	53	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	35	21	62	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	16	47	17	50	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	50	15	44	0	0	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	56	14	41	0	0	1	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	59	10	29	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	56	14	41	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	47	16	47	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	53	14	41	0	0	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	24	71	9	26	0	0	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	71	9	26	0	0	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 October 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Swarland First School, Morpeth, NE65 9JP

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we inspected your school. We enjoyed working with you and looking at your work and it helped us to understand what you think about all the interesting things that you do in your school.

We think your school is good and it has some parts that are excellent. Teachers plan activities that really interest you and you told us how much you enjoy your learning and practical activities. We were impressed with how you solve your problems in mathematics and with your reading development, which is particularly good.

You told us how much you like growing your own vegetables and eating them for lunch, despite the disappointment of the rabbit nibbling some of them, and we agree that these opportunities are excellent. Your behaviour is also excellent, and the older pupils take very good care of the younger children.

We have asked your school to help improve your work, by:

- making sure that teachers give you extra challenges and timescales in your writing and mathematics
- making sure that the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get more time to learn outdoors
- ensuring that the governing body checks out how well school priorities are progressing.

Once again, thank you very much for your help and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Irene Cochrane

Lead Inspector

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